

“Check Six”

Five summers ago my father took me on my first motorcycle ride down the long dirt road that lead through the woods of Minnesota. I tightly gripped my hands to the front of his jacket and held my head up high so I could clearly see every tree, branch, and leaf that we passed under; I was captivated by the beauty of nature, feeling as if I would fly away if I chose to release my arms from around his waist. I was suddenly brought back to reality when the canopy of trees opened up and we pulled onto the main road that surrounded the perimeter of Deer Lake. My dad, while ensuring that we wouldn't run into anything, told me to “check six.” Confused, for I had never heard of such a term, I asked him to repeat what he said. He responded by telling me to check what was behind us. Later that day, my dad explained to me that that phrase was commonly used in the military and from then on, commonly used within my household.

The clock positions have been a critical tool in aviation since WWI. Essentially, they are used to pin point a specific location. For instance: twelve o'clock refers to the area directly in front of the subject; three o'clock refers to the area on the right; and inevitably, six o'clock refers to the area in the back. While in combat, a pilot intends on placing themselves at the enemies “six”, for they are unable to maintain a careful watch of this area and therefore they are at a disadvantage. As a consequence, the enemy will be attempting to do the same thing. In an aircraft one must quickly “check six” to ensure no one is on their tail. Furthermore, it is a pilot's duty to check their partners “six” as well as their own.

I have come to find that “check six” is a term that does not only exist in a military environment. As human beings, we have an instinct to survey the area or remain aware of our

surroundings. For instance, when you find yourself in a situation that forces you to slam on the brakes in the car, it's not what is in front of you that should send shivers down your spine. This is due to the fact that you can clearly see what you are approaching and you have an opportunity to change it. Instead, you should worry about what is behind you. If there is another vehicle that was too close to begin with, slamming on your brakes will not give them enough reaction time and they will run into you. Being rear-ended is a common occurrence that we can avoid by either staying a safe distance away, or by "checking six" so as not to neglect others.

Furthermore, you may "check six" for your friends and family. Many times they put themselves in situations that they cannot see flaws with. It is your job to be courteous enough to point them out and steer them in the correct direction. "Check six", when used in this context, could simply mean watching out for somebody. This term is universal and everlasting. "Check six", used as a pillar in aircraft combat and daily life, will transcend time.